

Atty. Dkt. No. 034258-1201

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently amended) A sinter additive comprising a surface coated powdered manganese sulfide ~~for use as a sinter additive~~, wherein the surface coat comprises at least one coating agent selected from the group consisting of an ester of an inorganic or organic acid, an oil, a low melting polymer, and a mono- or multi-functional aliphatic alcohol with 2 to 12 carbon atoms, wherein the coating agent is present in an amount of 0.01 to 10 wt.% relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide to thereby reduce moisture uptake and improve oxidation protection of the sinter additive.

18. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the powdered manganese sulfide has a particle size of 1 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

19. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the powdered manganese sulfide has a particle size of 1 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .

20. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the coating agent is a melting polymer having ~~has~~ a melting point of less than 150°C and is a polyester, polyamide or a polyaliphatic compound.

21. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 18 wherein the coating agent is a melting polymer having ~~has~~ a melting point under 150°C and is a polyester, polyamide or a polyaliphatic compound.

22. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 19 wherein the coating agent ~~ester of the inorganic acid~~ is a phosphoric acid ester.

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23. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
24. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 18 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
25. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 19 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
26. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 23 wherein the phosphoric acid ester is diphenylcresylphosphate ~~or triphenylphosphate~~.
27. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 24 wherein the phosphoric acid ester is diphenylcresylphosphate ~~or triphenylphosphate~~.
28. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 25 wherein the phosphoric acid ester is diphenylcresylphosphate ~~or triphenylphosphate~~.
29. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 17 wherein the coating agent is an oil is selected from a paraffinic oil or silicon oil.
30. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 18 wherein the coating agent is an oil is selected from a paraffinic oil or silicon oil.
31. (Currently amended) The sinter additive of manganese sulfide according to claim 19 wherein the coating agent is an oil is selected from a paraffinic oil or silicon oil.
32. (Currently amended) A method of producing a surface-modified manganese sulfide sinter additive (MnS), comprising:
- providing powdered manganese sulfide;
- adding a coating agent to the manganese sulfide in an amount of 0.01 to 10 wt.% relative

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to the weight of the manganese sulfide to thereby coat the manganese sulfide;

wherein the coating agent is selected from the group consisting of an ester of an or an organic

or an organic acid, an oil, a low melting polymer, and a mono- to multi-functional aliphatic alcohol with 2 to 12 carbon atoms or mixtures thereof; and

wherein the mixture of the coating agent and the manganese sulfide is mixed for a period of time sufficient to ensure a homogeneous mixture.

33. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the manganese sulfide has a particle size from 1 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

34. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the manganese sulfide has a particle size from 1 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .

35. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 0.01 to 5.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.

36. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 33 wherein the coating agent added in an amount of 0.01 to 5.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.

37. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 34 wherein the coating agent is added in an amount of 0.01 to 5.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.

38. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 32 wherein the coating agent added in an amount of 1.0 to 3.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.

39. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 33 wherein the coating agent added in an amount of 1.0 to 3.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.

40. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 34 wherein the coating agent added in an amount of 1.0 to 3.0 wt.%, relative to the weight of the manganese sulfide used.

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41. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 32 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
42. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 33 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
43. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 34 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
44. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 35 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
45. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 36 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
46. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 37 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
47. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 38 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
48. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 39 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
49. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 40 wherein the coating agent ester of the inorganic acid is a phosphoric acid ester.
50. (Currently amended) The method according to any one of claims 41-49, where ~~the ester~~ of the phosphoric acid ester is diphenylcresylphosphate ~~or triphenylphosphate~~.
51. (Currently amended) A method of improving [[a]] compression ~~characteristics~~ of a sinter powder ~~mixture comprising a step of using~~ adding between 0.1 and 1.0 wt.% of the

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~~sinter additive of surface-coated powdered manganese sulfide according to any one of claims 17 to 31 to a metal powder as an additive.~~

52. (Cancelled)

53. (Currently amended) A sinter powder comprising the surface coated manganese sulfide sinter additive of surface-coated powdered manganese sulfide according to any one of claims 17 to 31, and a metal powder, wherein the manganese sulfide surface coating of the sinter additive is applied to the sinter additive treated with the surface-coat prior to addition to the metal powder.

54. (Currently amended) A method of producing a molded article, comprising the steps of:

(a) providing the a sinter powder comprising the sinter additive of any one of claims 17-31 and a powdered metal according to claim 53;

(b) compressing the sinter powder in a sinter mold that has an inner shape corresponding to a final contour of a finished molded article;

(c) following step (b), heating the compressed sinter powder to a temperature above an evaporation temperature of the coating agent, and optionally maintaining the compressed sinter powder at the temperature for a period of time sufficient to ensure complete evaporation of the coating agent; and

(d) following step (c), sintering the compressed sinter powder.[:;]

~~removing the molded article from the sinter mold.~~

55. (Cancelled)